

Title of Lesson: *Dear Father: A College Student's Perspective on WWI*
(Suggested grade level: 6)

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Background Information:

Background information for teacher:

The teacher can find information about [Alabama's involvement in World War I](#) on the Encyclopedia of Alabama Web site

Overview of lesson: This lesson will introduce students to an Alabama connection to World War I. The primary document that will be used is a letter to a father from a University of Alabama student, written on March 2, 1917, exactly one month before the United States declared war on Germany. The student discusses typical family topics before ending with his concerns about the possibility of war.

Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)

Fourth Grade: Standard 8 (p.31)

Sixth Grade: Standard 5 (p.43)

[National Standards for History, 1996](#)

Standards in History for Grades 5-12 (p. 112)

Era 7: Standard 2 – The changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I
Standard 2B – The student understands the causes of World War I and why the United States intervened.

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, (Bulletin 111, 2010)

Standard 2: Time, Continuity, and Change (p. 70)

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

[Alabama High School Graduation Exam](#)

Social Studies: Standard VI

1. Evaluate the causes of World War I.

- Identify and analyze America's involvement in World War I.
Causes of the war: long term and immediate
Causes of the United States' entry into the war
Mobilization
Homefront

Primary Learning Objective(s):

The student will be able to:

- Read a primary source letter in order to gather information about college life for a typical university student prior to America's entry into World War I.
- Compare/contrast college students' lives by comparing information in a letter from 1917 to the events surrounding a present-day student.

Time allotted: 45 minutes

Materials and Equipment:

- [Cliff Durr primary source letter](#) – classroom set
- Cliff Durr primary source transcript – classroom set (attached)
- Presidential Paragraphs rubric (attached)
- College Student Letter rubric (attached)

Technological Resources:

- Computer
- Document camera or transparency to display primary document if using the Modification

Background/Preparation:

Students should be familiar with the following:

- Events of the turn of the century, the Progressive era, and the events that created the war in Europe by 1914.
- Terms – *isolationism*, *nationalism*, *imperialism*, and *militarism*.
- People and countries involved in the early WWI era – Woodrow Wilson, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany, Italy, Russia, France, and Great Britain.
- Candidates and political platforms of the 1916 presidential election.

Procedures/Activities:**Engagement/Motivation Activity:**

Ask students if they know of anyone in college today. Allow time to respond. Discuss how college students stay in contact with their families (emails, texts, phone calls, and letters). Encourage students to brainstorm possible topics an eighteen-year-old son would write about to his father today. Ask the students to create a T-chart in their notebooks by drawing a line down the middle of the page and labeling the left column NOW and the right column THEN. Underneath the NOW section list possible topics, such as money, tuition, cars, tests, grades, sports, events at home, events in the news, and friends. Explain that eighteen-year-olds may not have changed much in the last 100 years.

Step 1	Distribute the primary document, and read it aloud or ask for volunteers to read the letter. As the letter is read aloud, tell the students to add the topics that Cliff wrote about to the T-chart under the label THEN. Topics should include tuition, late fees, shoes, birthday, and Wilson's campaign for re-election.
Step 2	Discuss the closing of the letter concerning Cliff's birthday and how he feels about current events. Students may need to be reminded that in 1917 the voting age was twenty-one. Ask students what the writer meant by "Wilson keeping us out of trouble." Relate this statement to Wilson's 1916 campaign slogan "He

	kept us out of the war.” Discuss why, despite Wilson’s pledge to keep America out of the war, he eventually asked Congress to declare war.
Step 3	On the bottom of the T-chart under the THEN section, the students should write a brief paragraph about Wilson’s campaign slogan and the events which occurred that altered his promise to keep America out of the war.
Step 4	Discuss the most recent elections and the slogans that were used. Encourage students to determine whether or not the candidate has fulfilled campaign promises. What events might occur that could cause the candidate to “go back on” or alter campaign promises as President Wilson did?
Step 5	On the bottom of the T-chart under the NOW section, the students should write a brief paragraph about the current president’s campaign slogans and the events that have/may occur that could cause the president to “go back on” or alter his promises.

Assessment Strategies:

Grade the T-chart for accuracy.

Grade the paragraphs using the attached rubric.

Extension:

The student should complete the T-chart as directed. Students should then highlight commonalities found on the chart (money request, clothing needs, current events, studying).

The student should write a letter to a parent or guardian following the directions on the rubric. Allow students to share their letters. Grade the letters using the attached rubric.

Remediation:

Students should be given the transcript of Cliff Durr’s letter. Allow students to highlight important information and various topics he discusses.

Students may work in pairs to read and complete both sides of the T-chart.

Accommodation:

Have copies of the transcript available for any student who may struggle with the reading of the source.

Prior to reading the letter, discuss unfamiliar vocabulary words with definitions on the bottom of the transcript. Students may wish to write synonyms for vocabulary words above the terms.

Allow students to highlight important details as they read the document.

An aide or peer may complete T-chart as the class discussion takes place.

Modification:

Model the creation of the T-chart on an overhead transparency or document camera. Students may copy the teacher’s chart.

Mr. John W. Durr
215 Moulton St.
Montgomery Ala.

University, Ala.
March 2, 1917

Dear Father;

The First of the month, accompanied by its usual obligations, has rolled around again. In addition to the usual expenses, the matriculation fee for the third term is due on the seventh. This is \$11.75. If it is not paid by the 7th a fine of \$5.00 will be imposed. On top of all that I am very greatly in need of a pair of shoes, but I can probably manage to get them out of the regular check. Please send the check as soon as convenient, for I am greatly in need of it.

To-day I am eighteen. Just old enough to be shot by the Germans but still too young to vote for the president who will declare war on Germany. However, if I was allowed to vote I think Wilson would be my choice for he has certainly done all he could to keep us out of trouble.

I haven't got time to write a letter for I have got to study for a class that comes next hour.

Love to all.

Affectionately

Cliff

Vocabulary

Accompanied – go along with

Obligation – duty; responsibility

Matriculation – admission

Convenient – practical; advantageous

Declare – say publicly; announce

Presidential Paragraphs

Student Name _____

Directions:

Using the T-chart assignment:

- Under the THEN section, write a brief paragraph about Wilson’s campaign slogan, “He Kept Us out of War,” and the events that caused Wilson to declare war.
- Under the NOW section, write a brief paragraph about a campaign promise of the current president and the events that led to not fulfilling that promise.

You will be graded using the rubric below:

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Score
Content	Topic/subject is clear and explicitly stated.	Topic/subject is generally clear though it may not be explicitly stated.	Topic/subject may be vague.	Topic/subject is unclear or confusing.	
Paragraph Construction	Paragraph(s) have three or more supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	Paragraph(s) have two supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	Paragraph(s) have one supporting detail sentence that relates back to the main idea.	Paragraph(s) have no supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	
Capitalization & Punctuation	Writer makes no errors in capitalization or punctuation, so the paper is exceptionally easy to read.	Writer makes 1 or 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation, but the paper is still easy to read.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and interrupt the flow.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and greatly interrupt the flow.	
Grammar & Spelling	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	
Accuracy of Facts (Content)	All supportive events are detailed accurately.	Almost all supportive events are detailed accurately.	Some supportive events are detailed inaccurately.	No events are described or events given are inaccurate.	

Total _____

College Student Letter

Student Name _____

Directions:

Assume the identity of a present-day college student. Write a friendly letter to your father that includes the following:

- Financial needs
 - Tuition (research to find current tuition costs)
 - Day-to-day expenses
- Personal interests
- Presidential actions related to campaign promises or thoughts on current political events

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Score
Salutation and Closing	Salutation and closing have no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 3 or more errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and/or closing are missing.	
Sentences & Paragraphs	Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed and of varied structure.	All sentences are complete and well-constructed (no fragments, no run-ons). Paragraphing is generally done well.	Most sentences are complete and well-constructed. Paragraphing needs some work.	Many sentence fragments or run-on sentences OR paragraphing needs lots of work.	
Grammar & spelling	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.	
Content Accuracy	The letter contains at least 5 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains 3-4 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains 1-2 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains no accurate facts about the topic.	

Total _____